



a million
voices for
nature



RSPB first book of
birds



Anita Ganeri Illustrated by Chris Shields



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Birds

Birds are everywhere! Wherever you are, you can see them from your window or outside, even if you live in a big city. They are easy to see and fun to watch.

This book will help you name most of the birds you see around you. It also tells you about what they do and where they like to live. Find out which bird collects acorns. And which bird swallows stones!

At the back of this book is a Spotter's Guide to help you remember the birds you spot. You could also write down the birds you see, or draw them. Don't forget to listen to them too.

Turn the page to find out all about birds!



Robin

Robins are easy to find. They have orange faces and chests. They live in woods, parks and gardens. Robins sing all year round to keep other robins away from their homes.

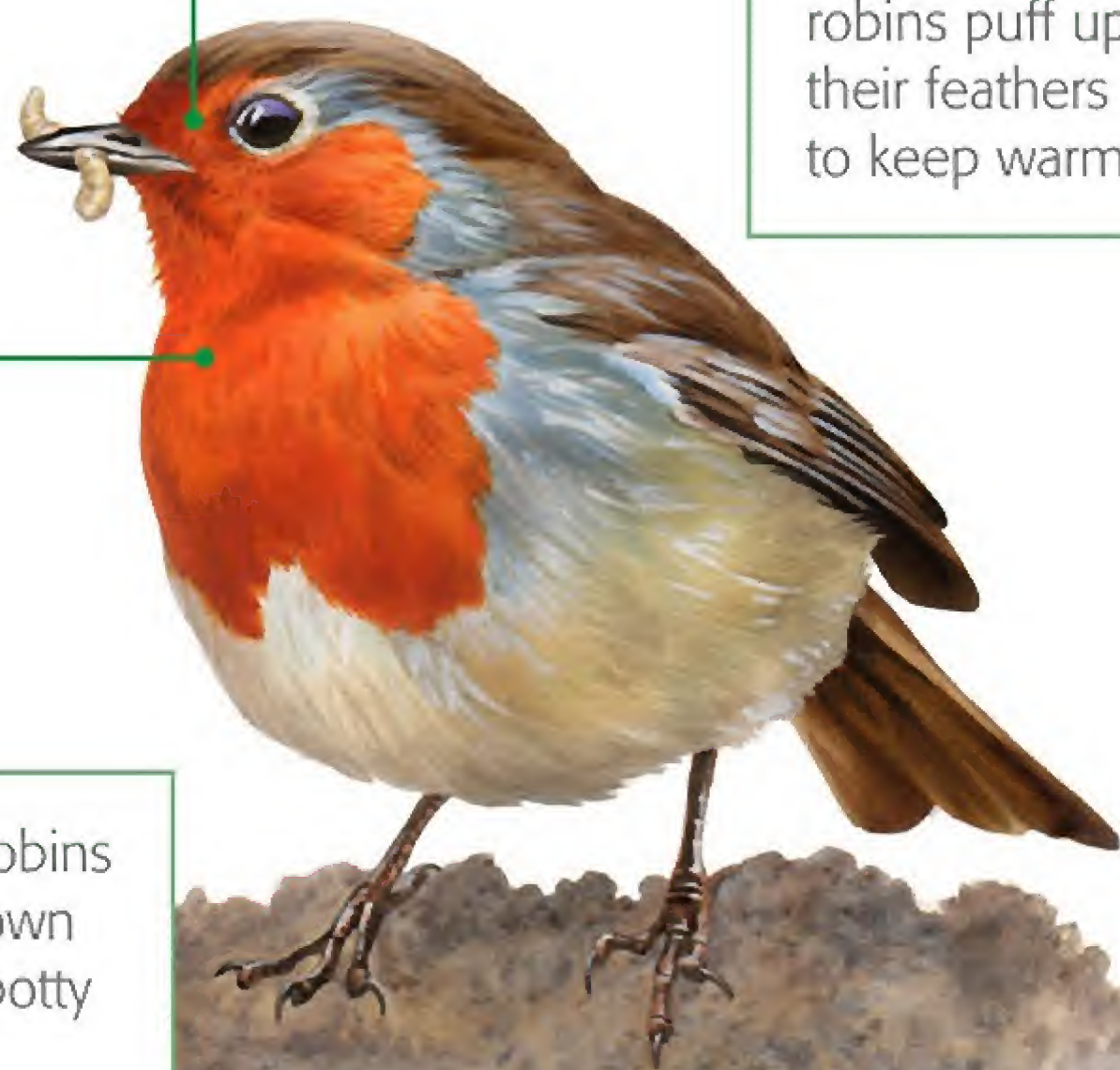
Orange face

Orange chest

In winter, robins puff up their feathers to keep warm.

Baby robins are brown with spotty fronts.

They eat worms, seeds and fruit.



Blue tit

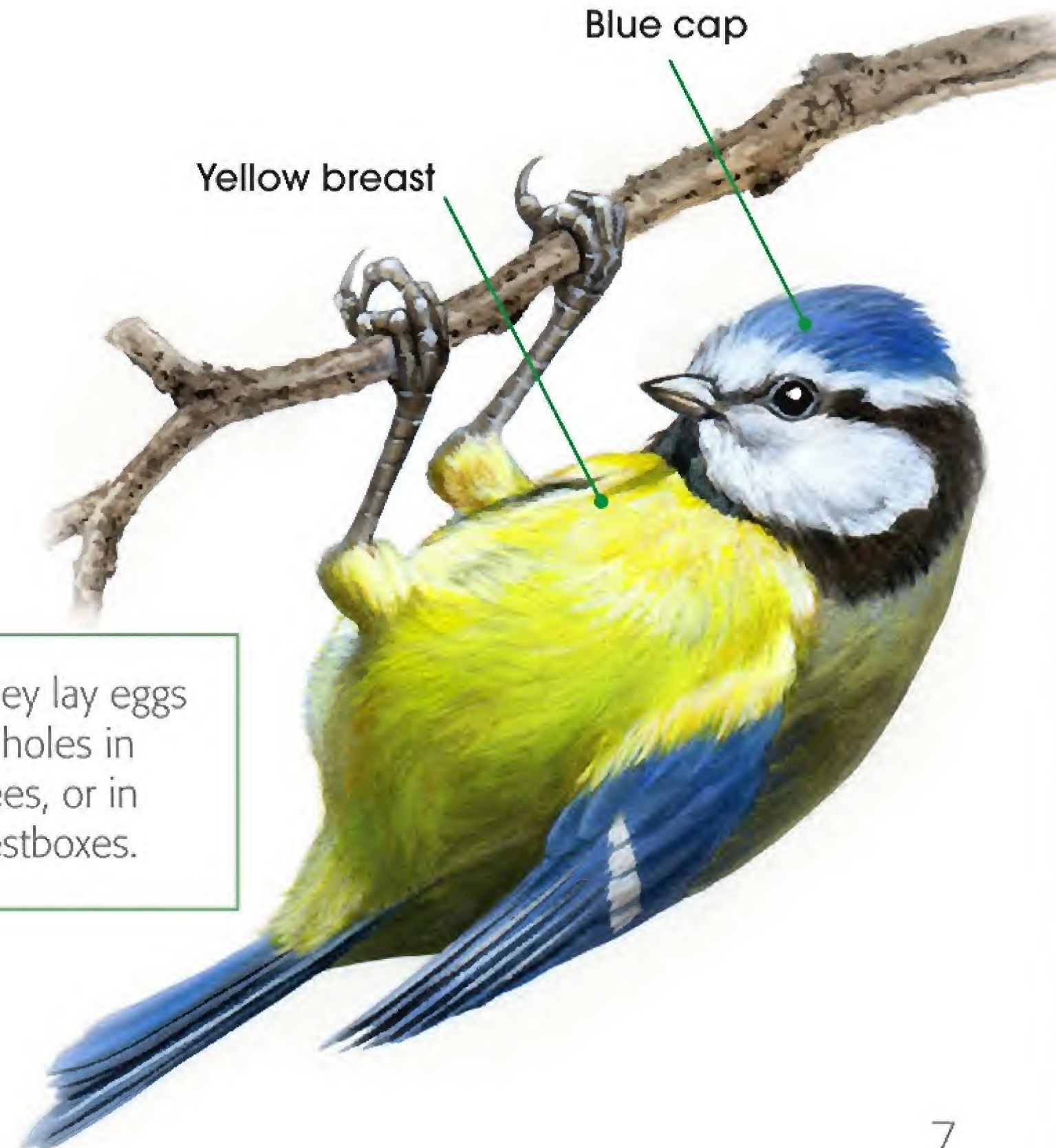
Blue tits have yellow breasts and bright blue caps. They live in gardens, parks and woods. Sometimes they hang upside down when they are feeding!

Blue tits eat insects, spiders, seeds, nuts and fruit.

Blue cap

Yellow breast

They lay eggs in holes in trees, or in nestboxes.





Great tit

Great tits are bigger than blue tits. They have a black stripe down their bellies. A male has a thicker black stripe than a female. Great tits live in woods, parks and gardens.

Black head with white cheeks

Great tits eat insects, nuts and seeds.

Green back

Black stripe down the front

Listen out for their 'teacher teacher' song.

Buzzard



A buzzard is a large bird of prey. Look out for it soaring high in the sky or perched on a fencepost. It can fly for a long time without flapping its wings.

Buzzards eat voles, rabbits, birds, insects and worms.

Broad wings

Wing-tips open like fingers

Short tail often spread like a fan.

They have sharp eyes for spotting prey.



Kestrel

The kestrel is a falcon. Watch out for it hovering over grass near roads. It is looking for food. Kestrels eat lots of mice and voles.

Kestrels sometimes live in cities.

Long pointed wings



Long tail

Some kestrels use the old nests of crows and other birds.

Male has grey tail with black band



Puffin

A puffin spends most of its life out at sea. It has a big beak. In summer, its beak turns bright red, blue and yellow. It has black wings and a white breast. It has orange feet and legs.

Puffins lay their eggs in burrows at the tops of cliffs.

Black and white head

They swim underwater to catch fish in their beaks.

Colourful beak



Bright orange legs and feet



Oystercatcher

You can see oystercatchers on the coast and by lakes and rivers. They have a long red beak for sticking into the mud and sand. They eat shellfish and worms.

Oystercatchers use their beak to break into shells.

Long orange beak

Big, black and white bird

Listen for their loud, piping calls.

Pink legs

Look out for gulls and crows stealing food from oystercatchers!



Mallard

Mallards are easy to find. They are a type of duck. A male has a green head and neck and a blue patch on his wing. A female is mostly brown. Watch them tip up in the water to feed.

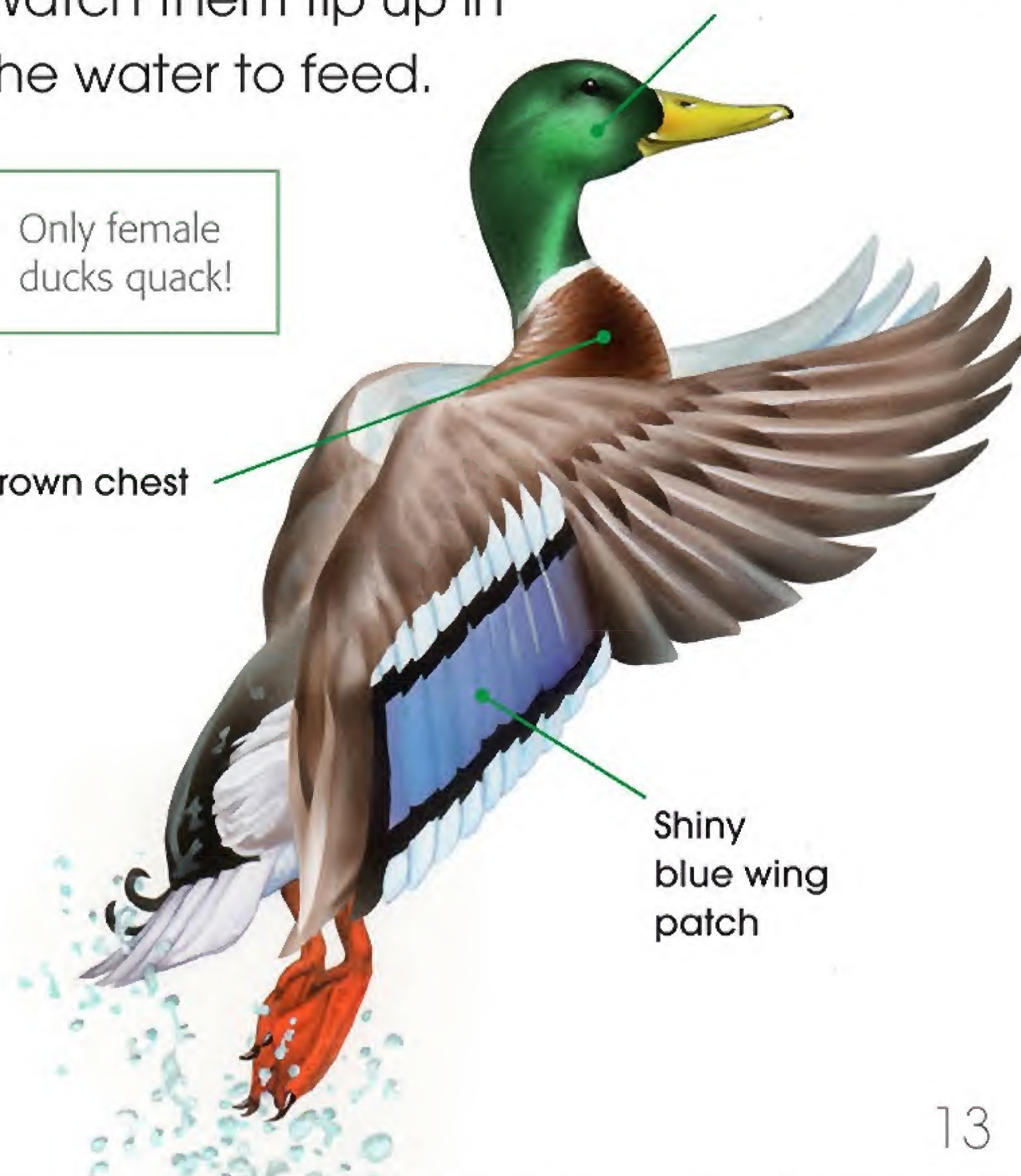
They eat seeds, plants, insects and shellfish.

Dark green head and neck

Only female ducks quack!

Brown chest

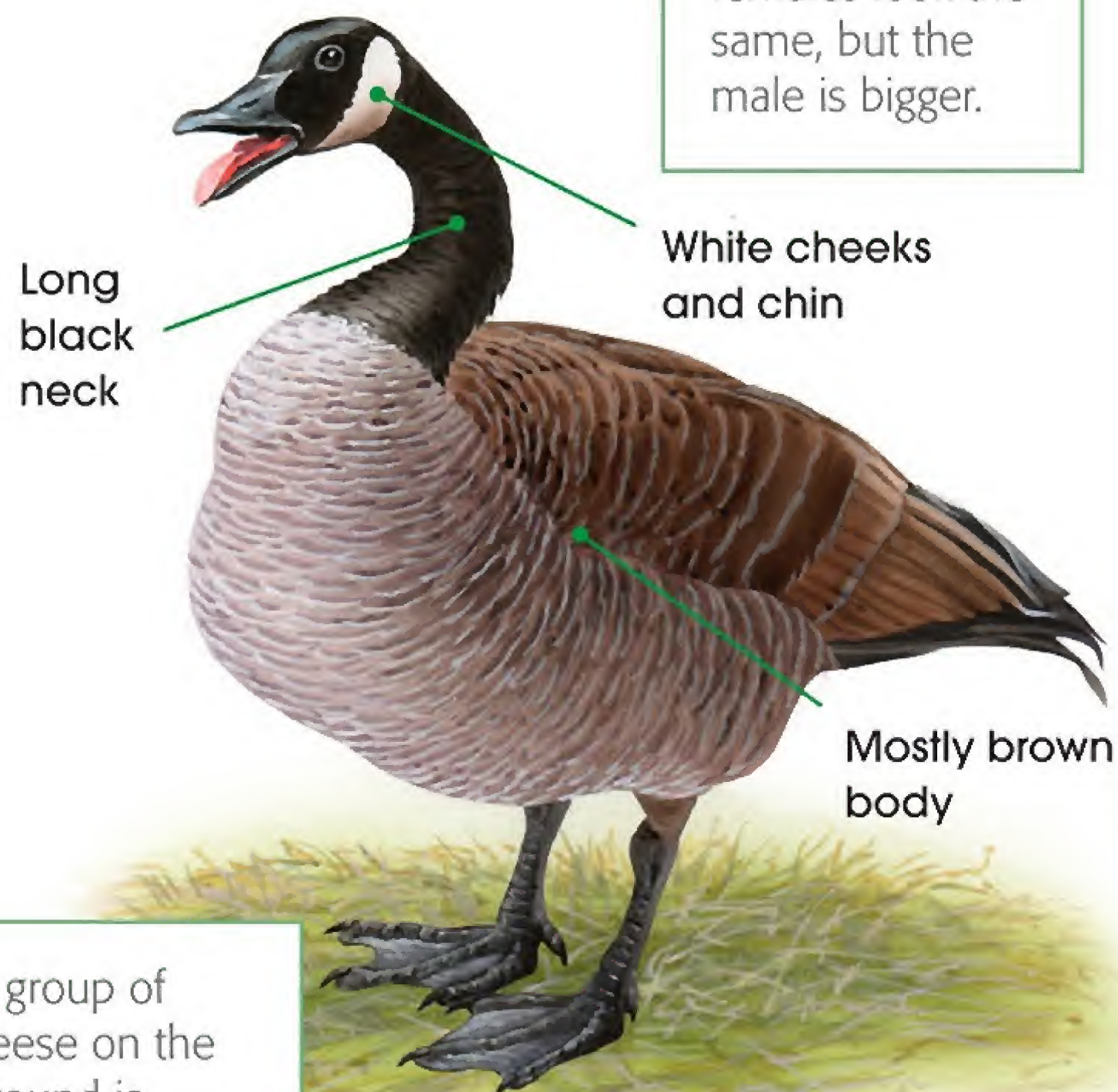
Shiny blue wing patch





Canada goose

These are big birds. You can see flocks of them near lakes and in parks. They honk loudly. Look out for them flying in a V-shape in the sky.



Males and females look the same, but the male is bigger.

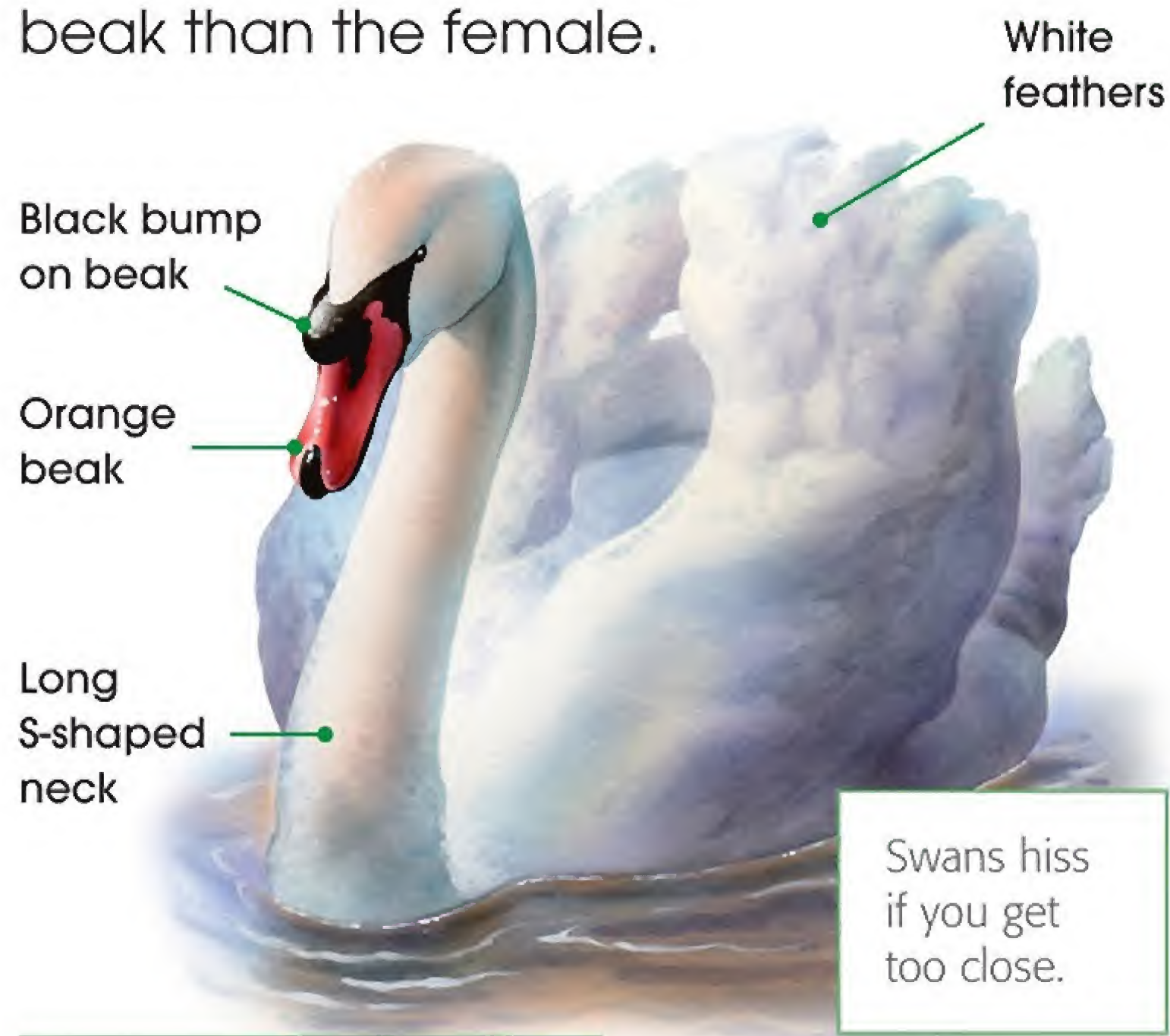
A group of geese on the ground is called a gaggle.



Mute swan

A mute swan is a huge bird. It lives on lakes, rivers and canals. It needs a lot of space to take off and land. The male has a bigger black bump on its beak than the female.

A mute swan swallows stones to help grind up its food.



Swans hiss if you get too close.

Cygnets (baby swans) have grey-brown feathers.



House sparrow

You can see house sparrows in towns, cities, parks and gardens. They like to live near people. You could help house sparrows by putting up a nestbox, or planting flowers in your garden to attract insects for them to eat.



Black bib

House sparrows eat seeds, berries and insects.

Brown and black feathers

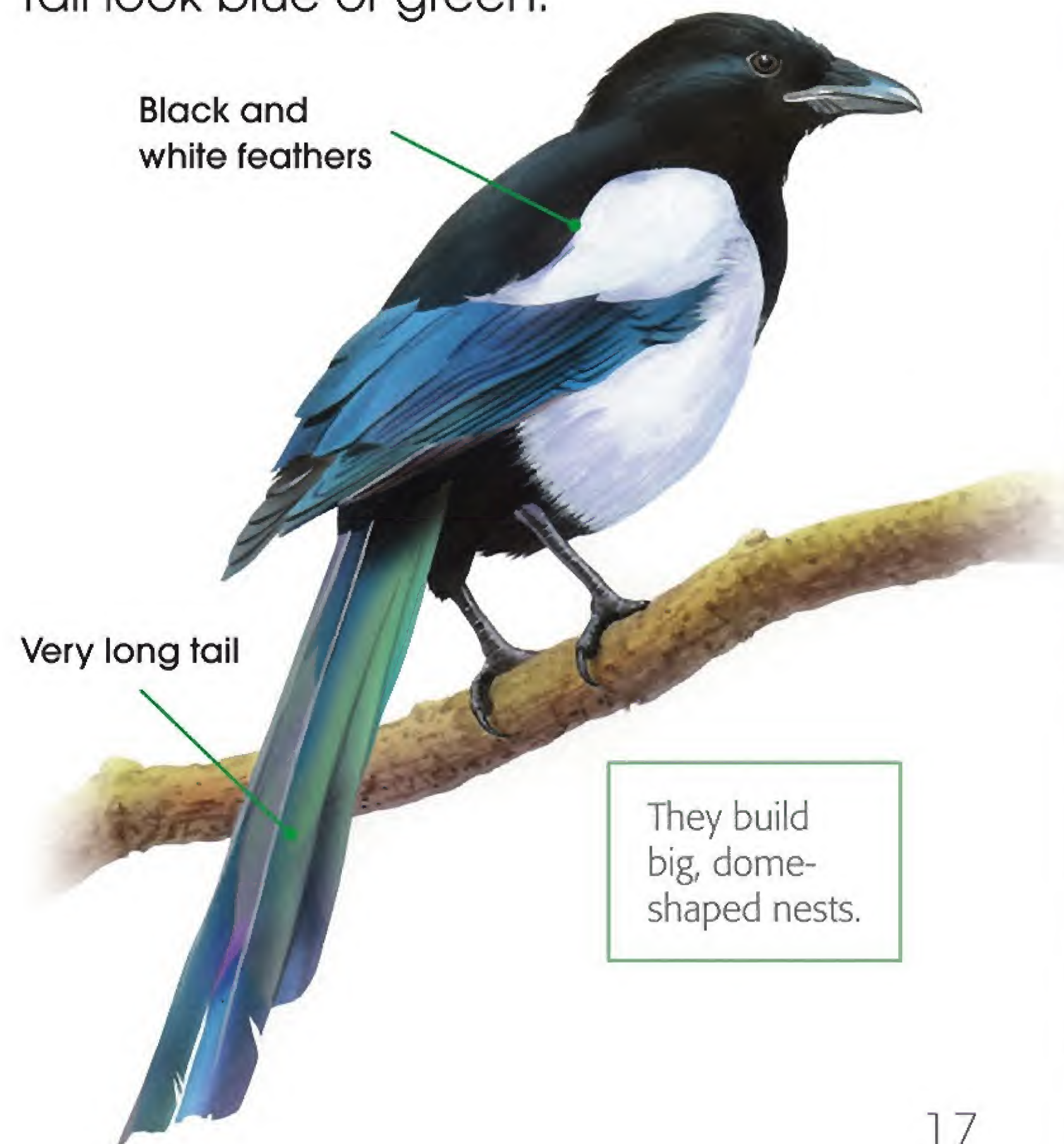
This picture is a male. The female has a brown head, with no head markings or black bib.



Magpie

Magpies are large, noisy birds that are easy to see. Listen for their loud 'chack-chack' call. Sometimes the light makes their wings and tail look blue or green.

Sometimes magpies store food in holes in the ground.



Black and white feathers

Very long tail

They build big, dome-shaped nests.



Barn owl

Look for barn owls just before it gets dark. You might see one hunting over farmland or over grass by a road. Sometimes they make a loud, shrieking noise. Baby barn owls snore when they want to be fed.

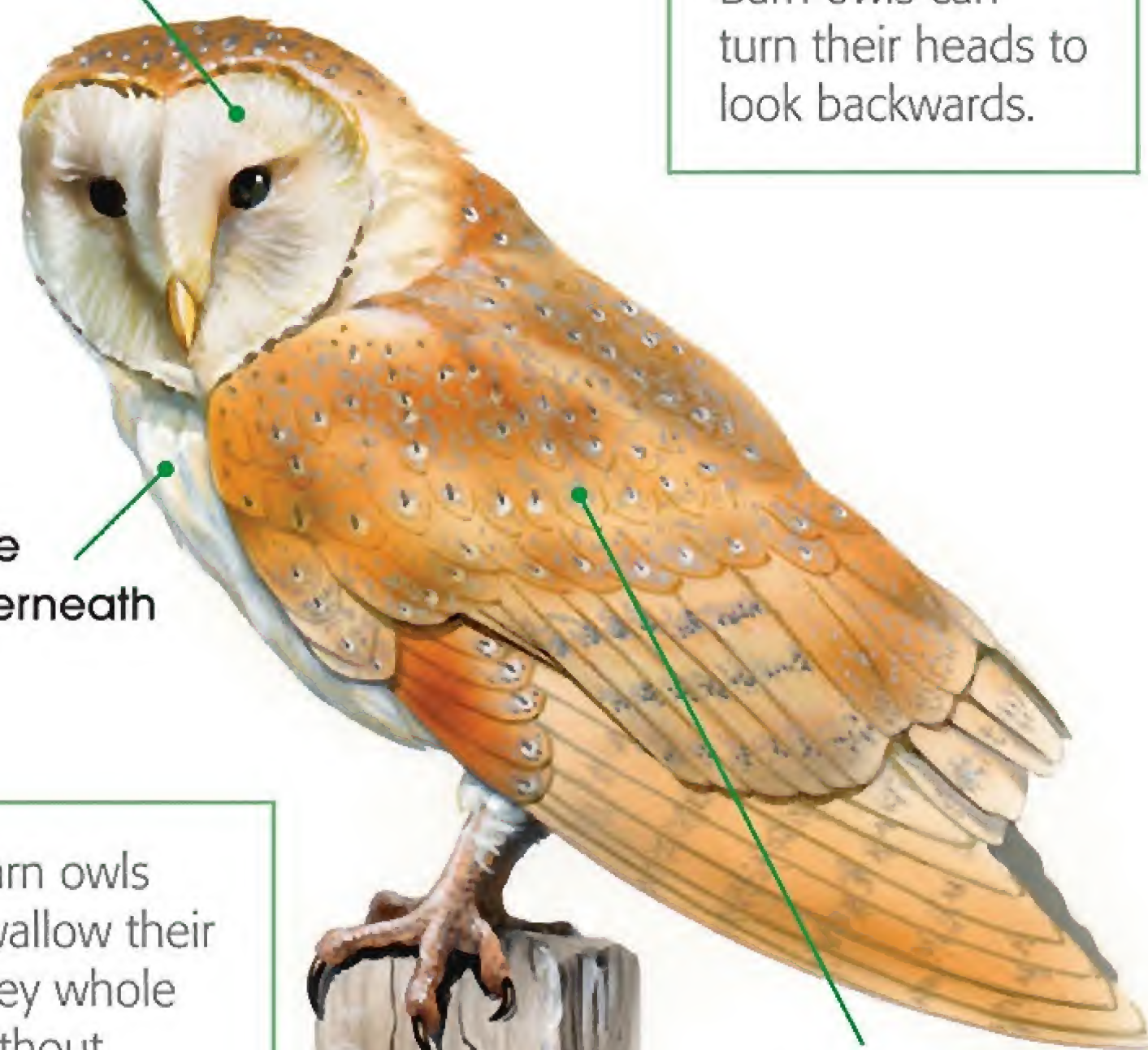
White face

Barn owls can turn their heads to look backwards.

White underneath

Barn owls swallow their prey whole without chewing first.

Sandy-brown and grey



Tawny owl

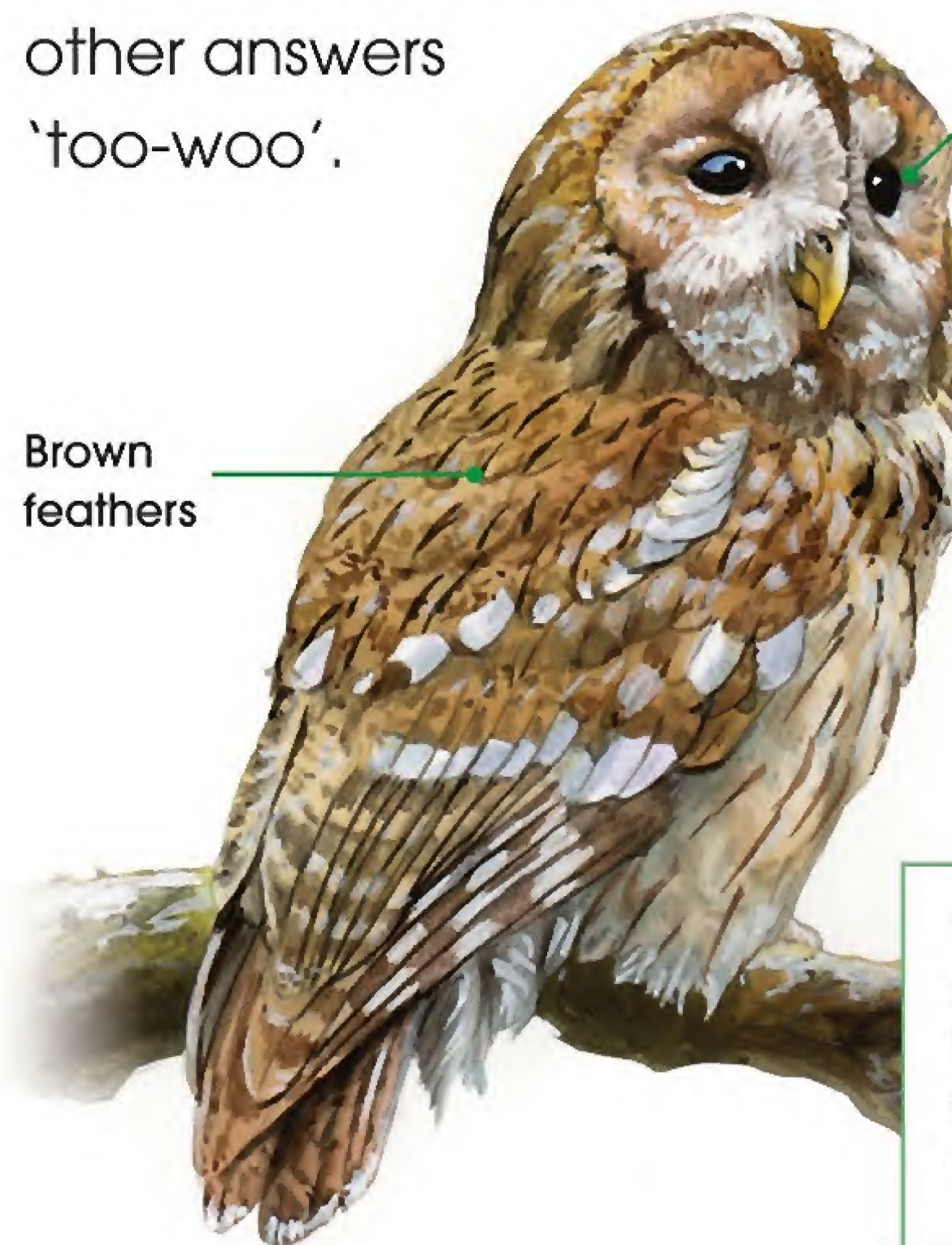
Tawny owls are big owls that live in woods, parks and big gardens. They hunt at night and are hard to see. You might hear them hooting to each other. One bird calls 'too-whit' and the other answers 'too-woo'.

Baby owls are called 'owlets'.

Big, black eyes

Brown feathers

They have very good hearing for finding food in the dark.



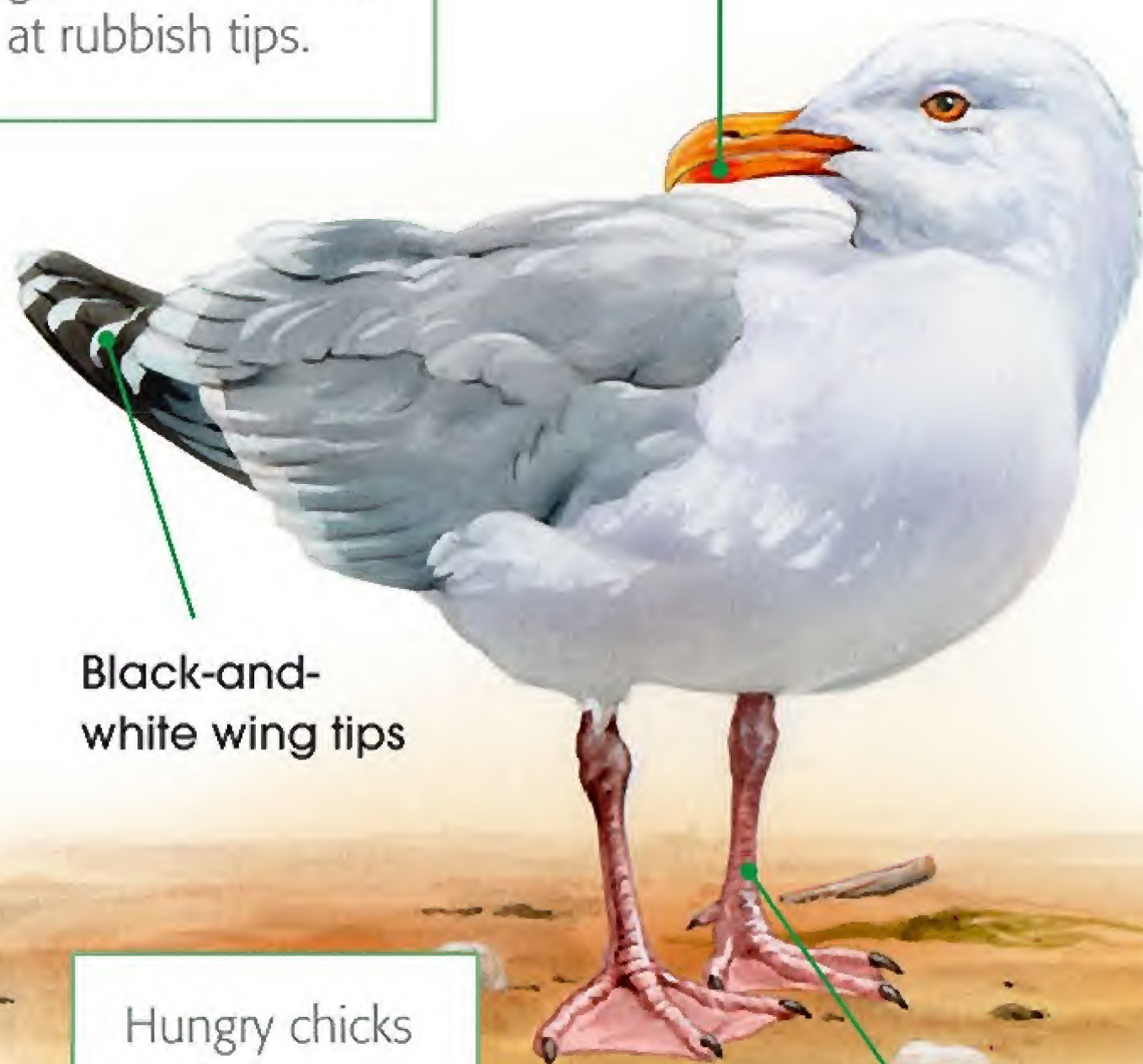


Herring gull

You can see herring gulls at the seaside. Sometimes, you will also see them a long way from the sea! They are big and mostly grey and white.

Some herring gulls look for food at rubbish tips.

Yellow beak with red spot



Black-and-white wing tips

Hungry chicks peck the red spot on an adult's beak to be fed.

Pink legs



Grey heron

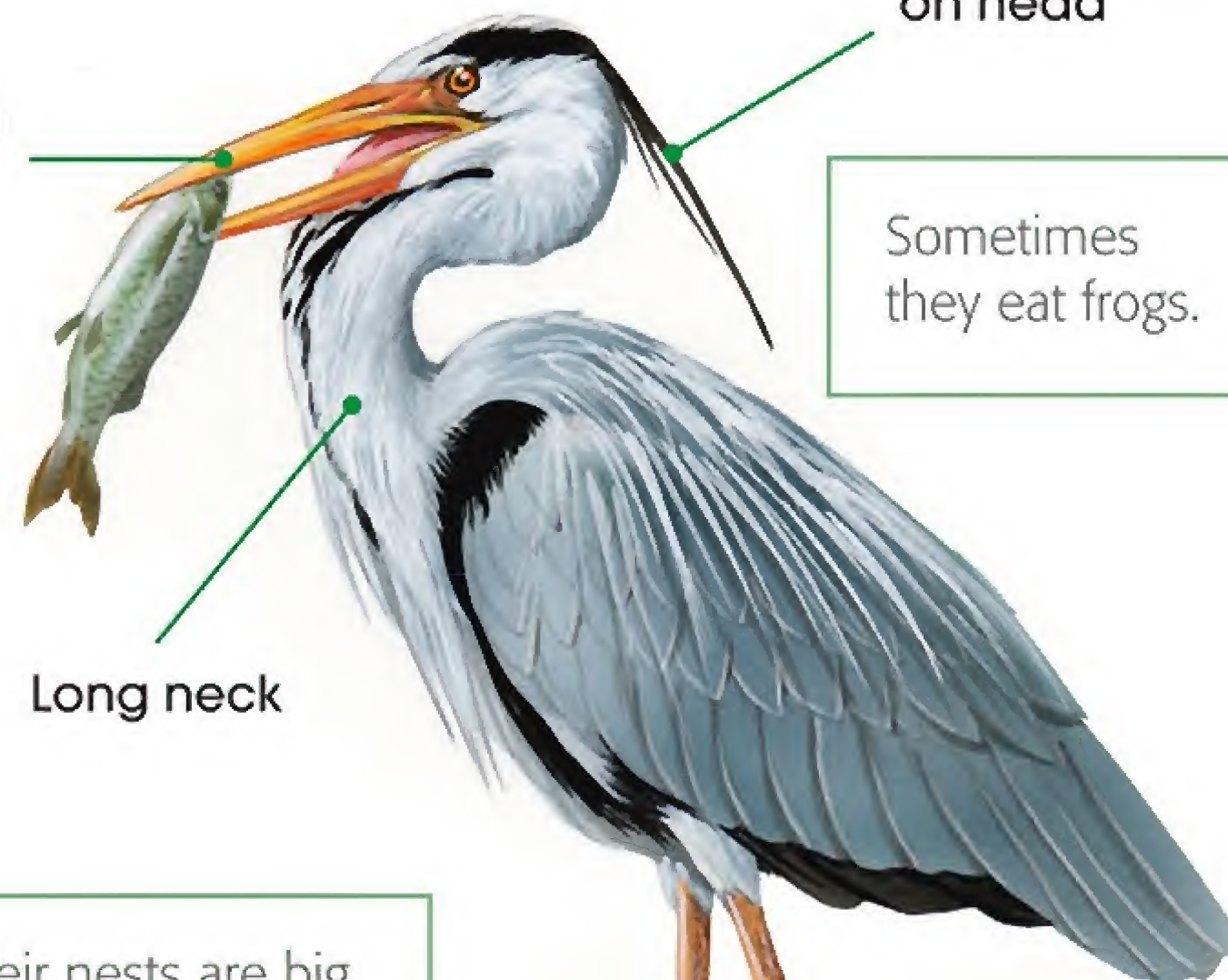
These birds have long necks and long legs. Look for them standing still by rivers and lakes. They can stand hunched up or with their neck stretched out. They are very good at fishing!

Grey herons use a toe like a comb to brush their feathers.

Adult has long black feathers on head

Sometimes they eat frogs.

Long bill



Long neck

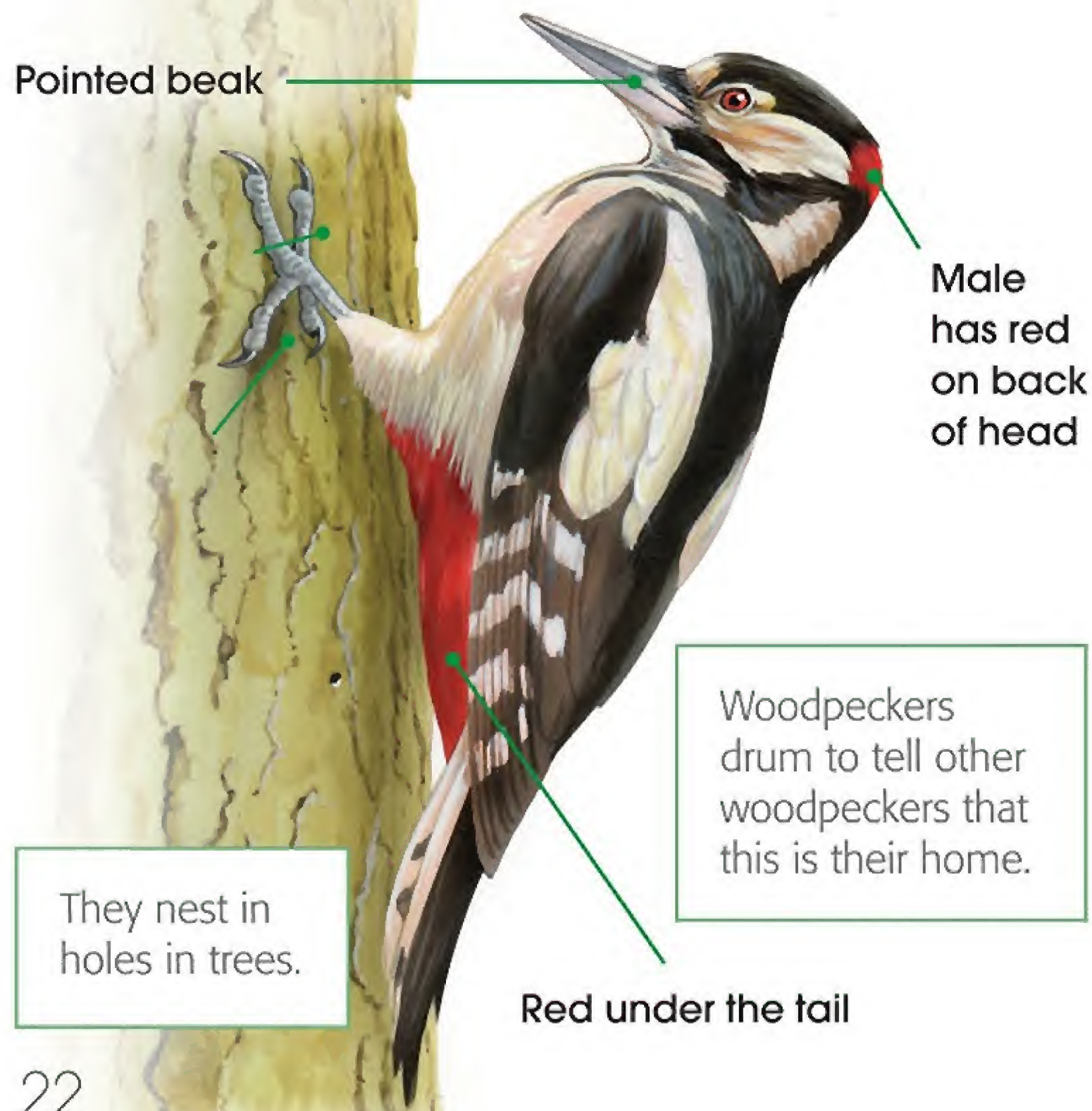
Their nests are big and made of sticks.

Long legs



Great spotted woodpecker

A great spotted woodpecker is black and white with a red patch under its tail. It lives in woods but sometimes comes into gardens to feed. It drums its beak against a trunk instead of singing.



They nest in holes in trees.

Woodpeckers drum to tell other woodpeckers that this is their home.



Cuckoo

Cuckoos are hard to see but you might hear one. They go 'cuck-oo, cuck-oo'. They lay their eggs in other birds' nests. These birds look after the young cuckoos.

Cuckoos live in many places including woods and moors.



In Britain, you only see cuckoos in the spring and summer.



Moorhen

Moorhens are dark-coloured waterbirds. They have a white line on their sides and white under their tails. If you see one walking, look at its long legs and toes.

Red and yellow beak

White under the tail

White line

Lots of moorhens sleep in trees.

The young moorhens help to raise their baby brothers and sisters.

Long, green legs and toes



Coot

It is easy to get coots and moorhens mixed up. They are both waterbirds. A coot has a black body and a white beak and forehead. They are bigger than moorhens.

Look at the coot's toes. The flaps of skin help it swim.

Coots run on the water before they take off.

White beak and forehead

Black

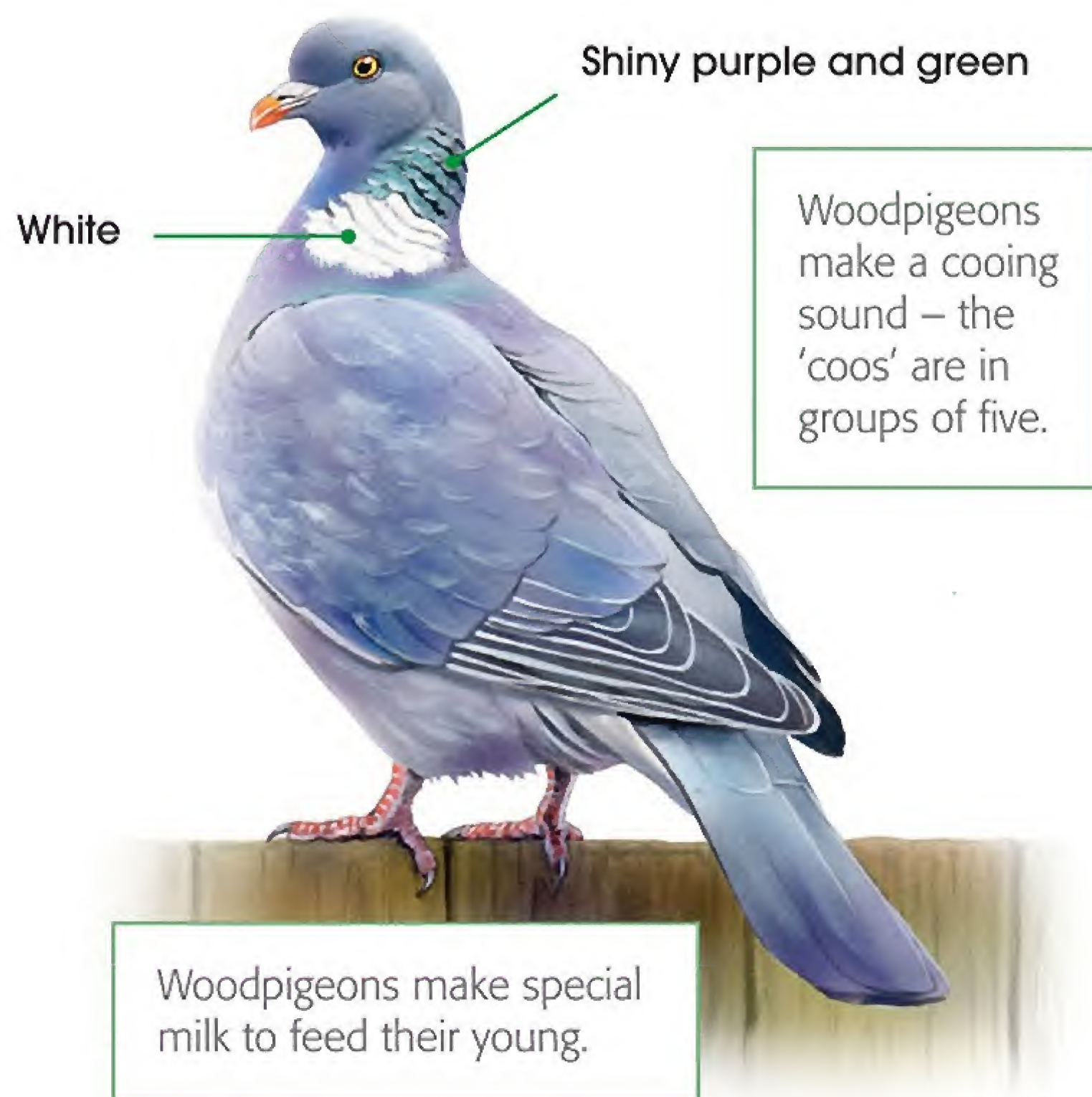
Sometimes they steal food from swans and ducks.

Long legs and toes



Woodpigeon

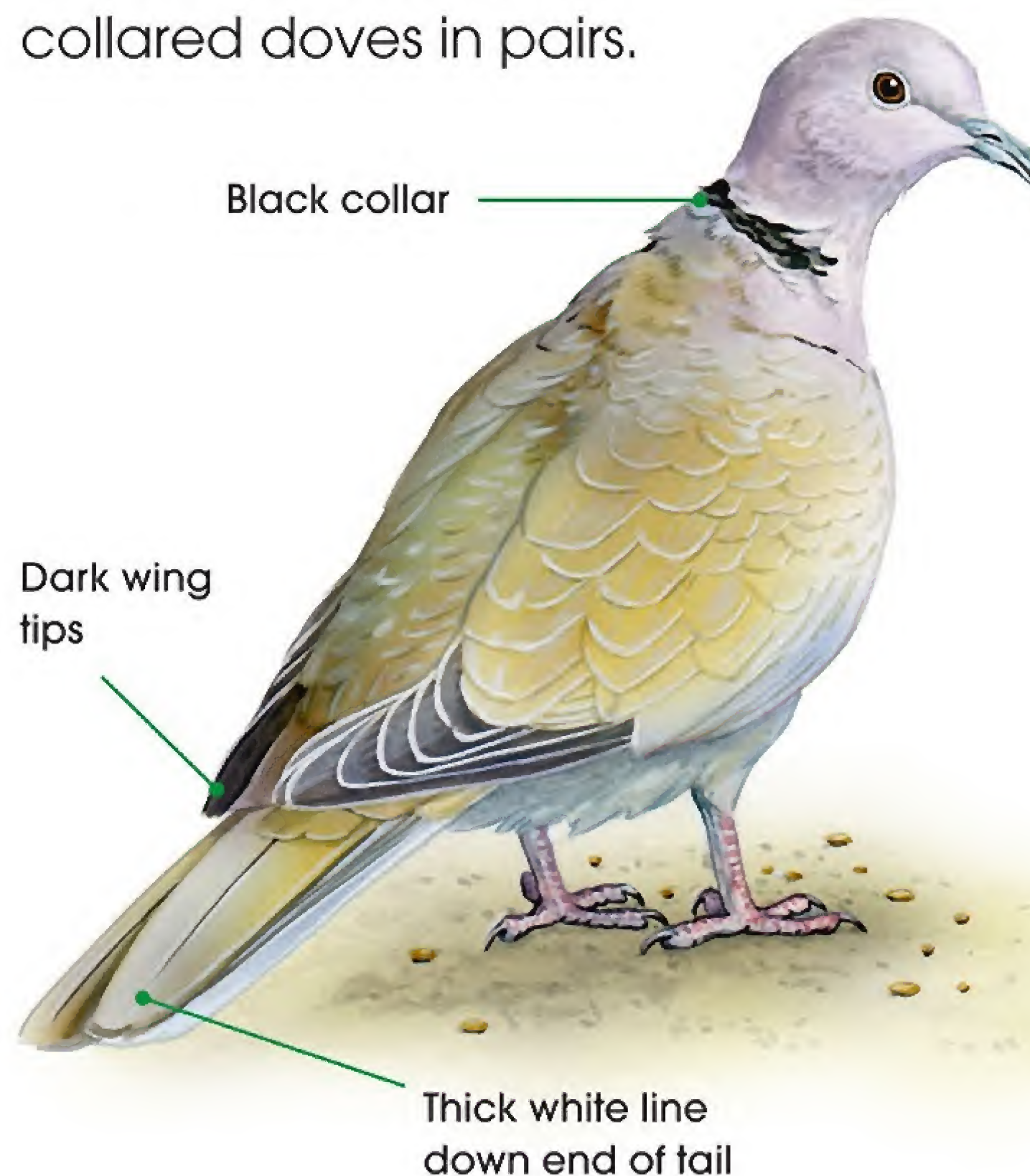
This big pigeon often comes into gardens. Look for a white patch on its neck. When it flies, you can see a white stripe across its wings. As a woodpigeon flies out of a tree, its wings make a lot of noise!



Collared dove

A collared dove is mostly pinkish-grey. It is smaller than a woodpigeon. Look for its black collar. It lives in gardens, parks and farms. You often see collared doves in pairs.

Collared doves make a cooing sound - the 'coos' are in groups of three.





Kingfisher

Kingfishers are small, and mostly blue and orange. Look for them flying low and fast over a river or lake. They dive underwater to catch fish with their long sharp beak.

Long, sharp beak

Kingfishers lay their eggs in burrows in river banks.

Female beak has orange on it. Male beak is all black.

Kingfishers eat fish, such as minnows and sticklebacks.

Blue and orange



Blackbird

Look for blackbirds feeding in the garden. They eat worms. The male is black with a yellow beak and yellow rings around his eyes. Females are brown.

Sometimes blackbirds grow some white feathers instead of black ones!

Yellow eye-ring

Yellow beak

Black

Watch a blackbird looking for food under leaves or listening for worms.



Wren

A wren is a tiny, brown bird with a big voice. Its tail sticks up. It lives in woods and gardens. It uses its beak to pick up insects to eat.

Some wrens eat tadpoles!

Tail sticks up

Short, rounded wings

A wren weighs less than a pencil.



Starling

A starling looks black but its feathers are really shiny purple and green. In the winter it has lots of white spots. It is often seen in the garden, eating insects and fruit.

Young starlings are brown.

Shiny black feathers

Short tail

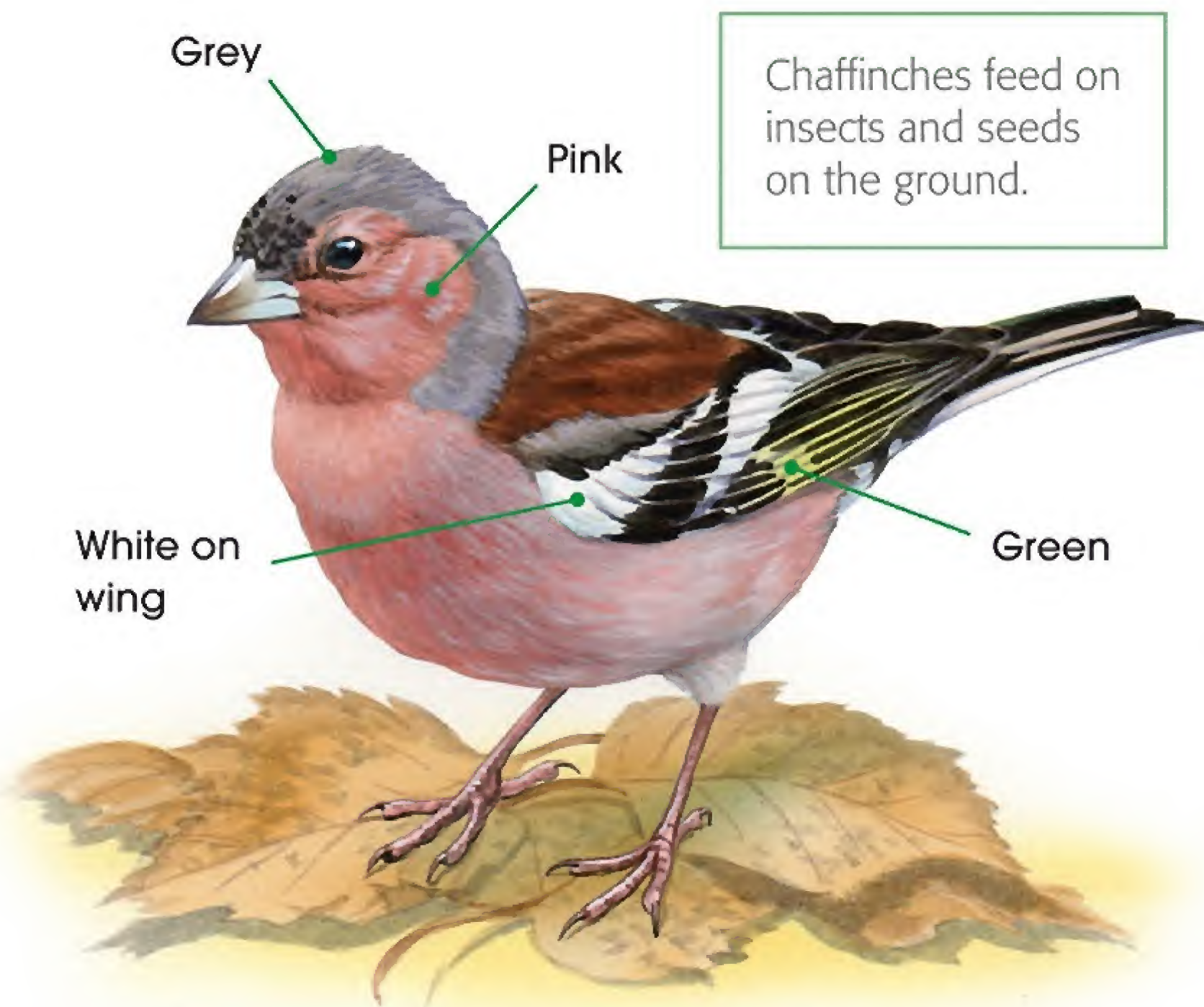
Starlings can copy the songs of other birds.

Starlings are smaller than blackbirds.



Chaffinch

A chaffinch is a small but brightly coloured bird. The male is much more colourful than the female. They both have white markings on their wings. This picture is a male.



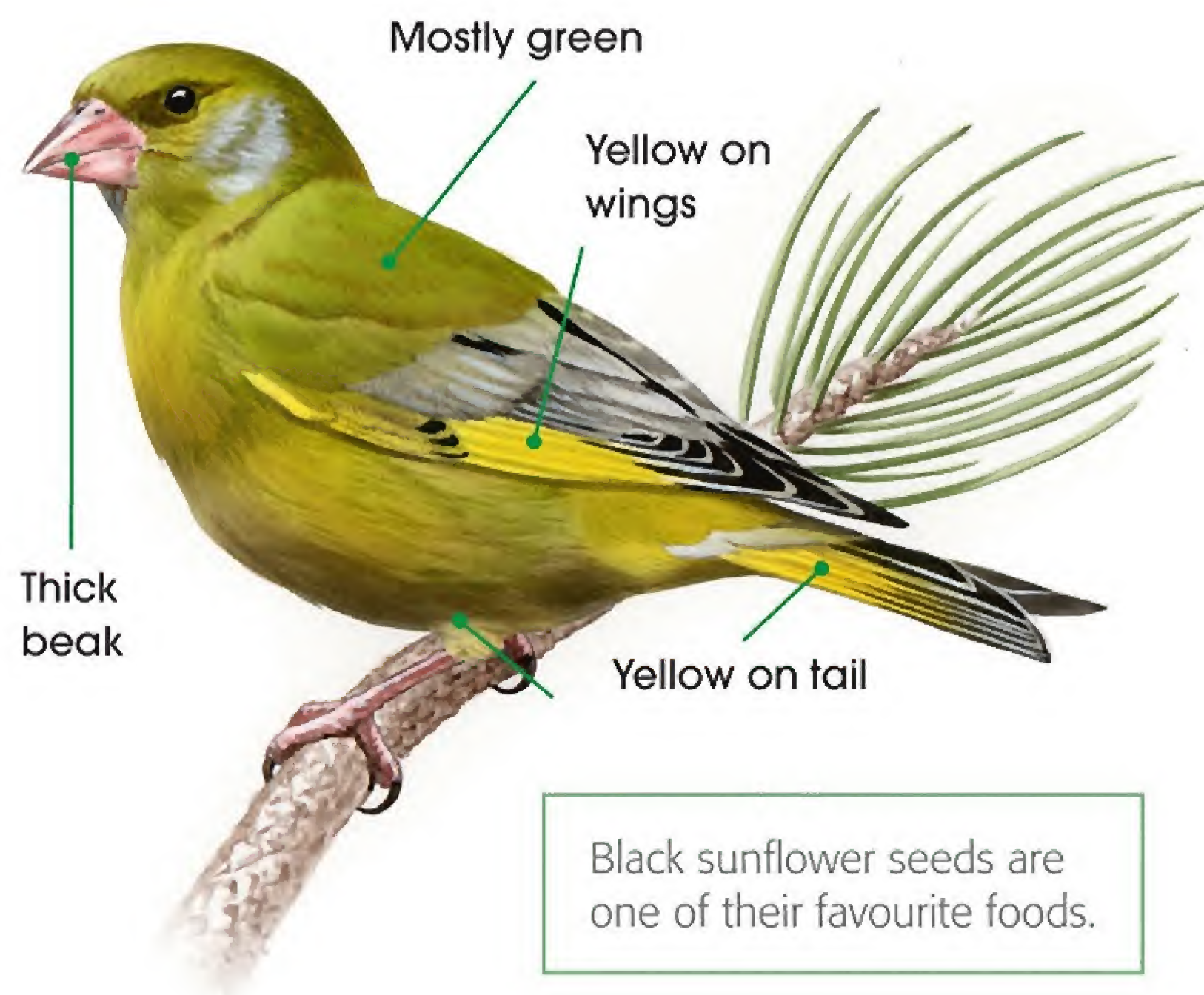
When a chaffinch flies it shows a flash of white on its wings.



Greenfinch

The greenfinch is about the size of a chaffinch. Greenfinches come into gardens and feed on seeds and peanuts at bird feeders.

Greenfinches don't like sharing a bird feeder with other birds!





Carrion crow

Carrion crows are big and black. They are very clever birds. They smash seashells open by flying up and dropping them on rocks. Crows eat insects, seeds, fruit and dead animals.

Crows eat other birds' eggs and chicks.

Black feathers

Thick black beak

Crows are so clever that they can count!



Pied wagtail

A pied wagtail is a small, black, white and grey bird. It is easy to spot. Watch for it wagging its long tail up and down.

Pied wagtails mostly eat insects.

They often live near water.

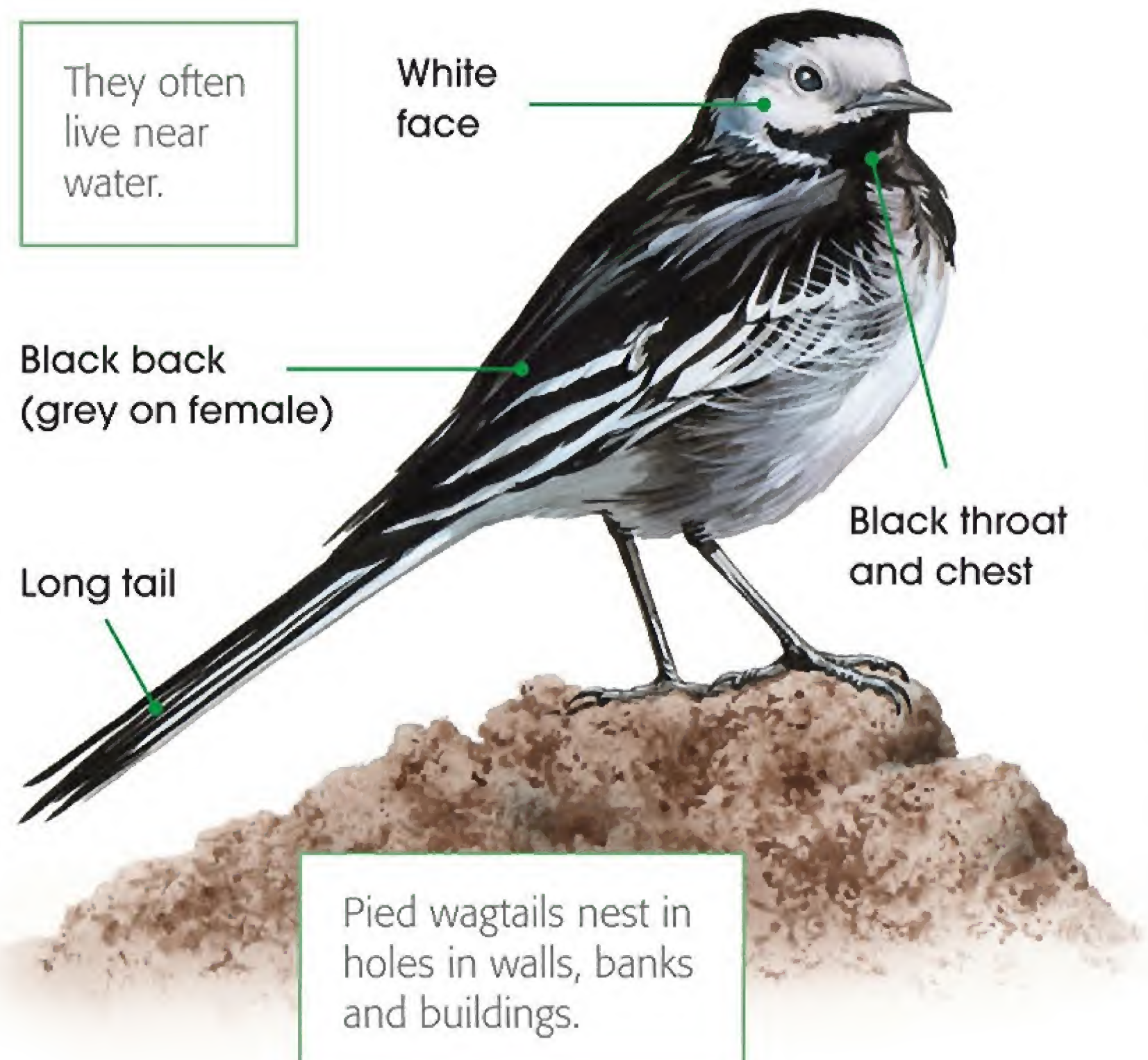
White face

Black back (grey on female)

Long tail

Black throat and chest

Pied wagtails nest in holes in walls, banks and buildings.





Jay

Jays are big, colourful birds that live in woods. Sometimes they are seen in gardens. Listen for their loud, screeching call. In the autumn they are busy collecting acorns. This is a good time to see them.

Jays bury acorns to eat in winter.

Pink-brown body

White lower back

Blue and black patch on wings

Black tail

They also eat insects, nuts and fruit.

Song thrush



Song thrushes live in woods, parks and gardens. They are very good singers. Song thrushes eat snails. They break the shells open by smashing them on stones.

Song thrushes sing the same thing over and over again.

Black spots

Brown

The spots on their front are shaped like upside down hearts.



Great crested grebe

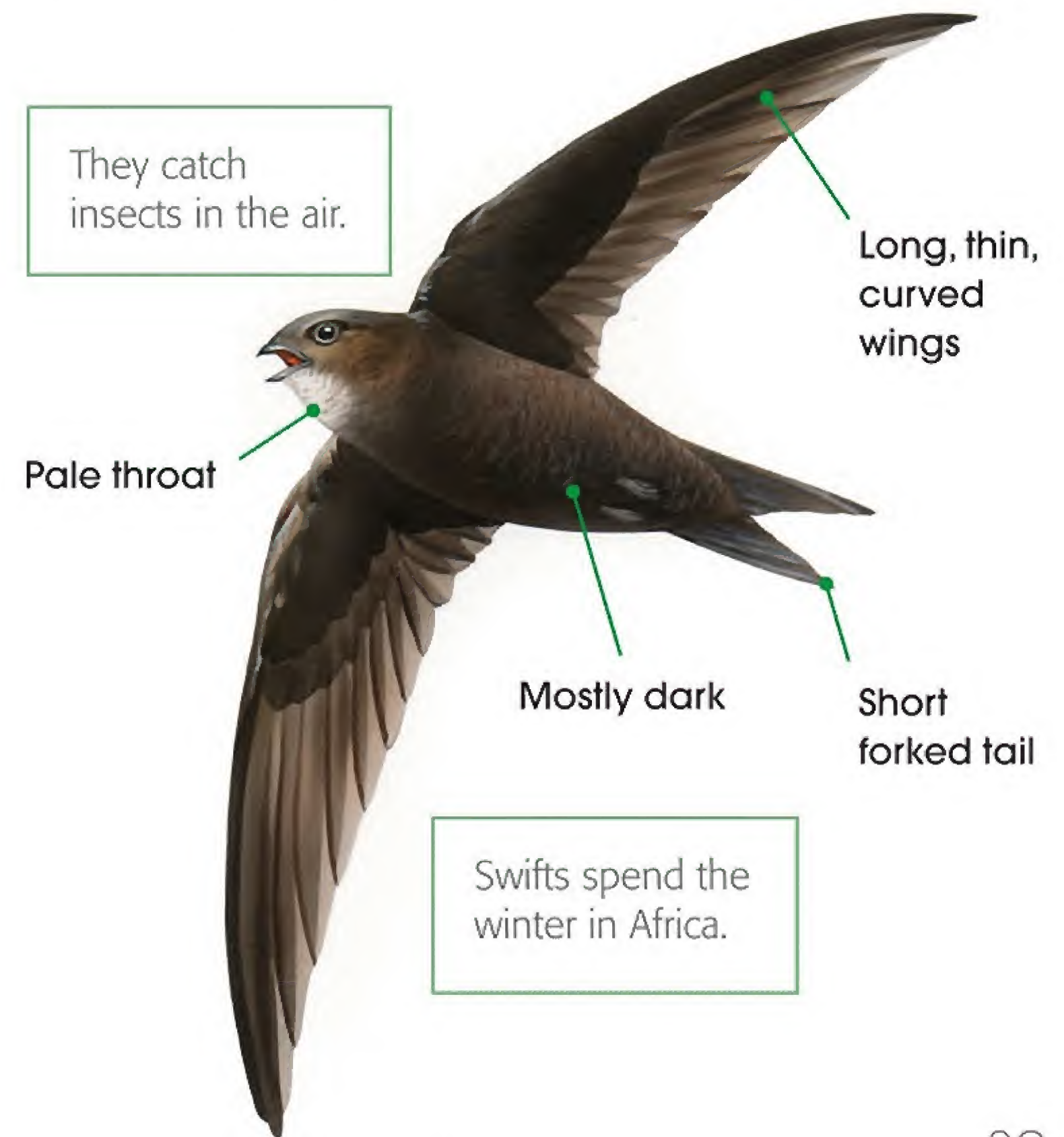
Look for these birds on lakes. You might see them shaking their heads. This picture shows a bird in the summer. In the winter they don't have the fancy head feathers.



Swift

In the summer, look in the sky to see swifts. They flap fast, then glide. When a young swift leaves the nest it flies non-stop for two or three years until it nests.

Swifts sleep as they fly.

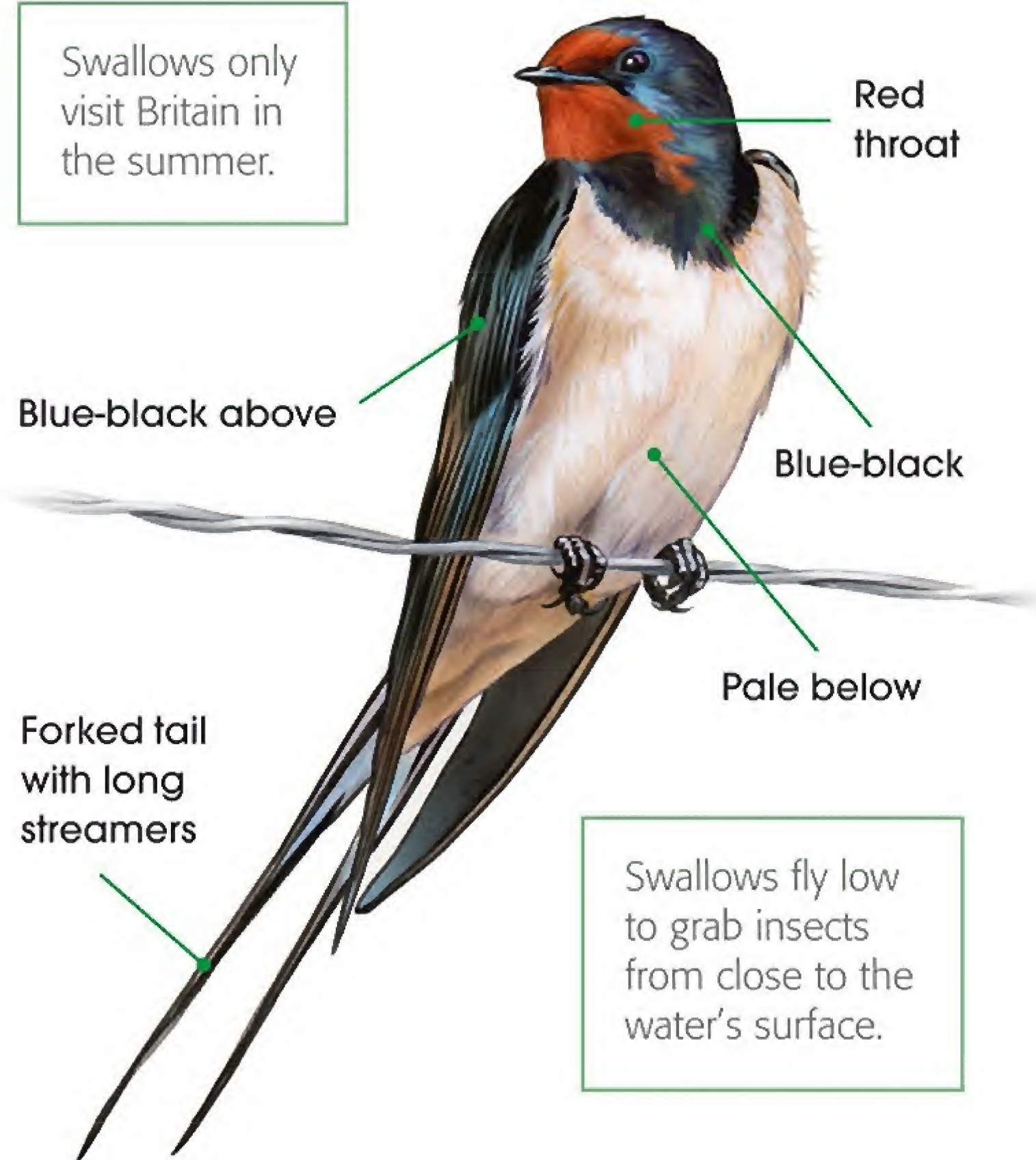




Swallow

Swallows have forked tails with long streamers. Like swifts, swallows are fast fliers. Look out for them darting low over the ground and water with swept-back wings.

Swallows only visit Britain in the summer.



Swallows fly low to grab insects from close to the water's surface.

Useful words

bird of prey a bird that catches animals and birds for food

falcon a kind of bird of prey

forked split into two

gaggle a group of geese, usually on the ground

nestboxes small boxes for birds to nest in

owlets baby owls

prey creatures that birds of prey catch and eat

shellfish snails, cockles and mussels

voles wild mammals that look like small brown hamsters

Spotter's guide

How many of these birds have you seen?



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